

Working for the Best Interest of the Child

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The CPS Mission

- Protect children by investigating abuse and neglect.
- Promote the well-being of children in permanent homes.
- Coordinate services to strengthen families.
- Prevent, intervene in and treat abuse and neglect of children.



A.R.S. 8-800

Definitions

- The Juvenile Court decides a child is **dependent** if the child is in need of proper and effective parental care and control and there is no parent or guardian willing or able to exercise such care and control.
- The relationship between a child and their parent is **severed** by the Juvenile Court if one of the listed severance grounds is met and it is clearly in the best interest of the child.



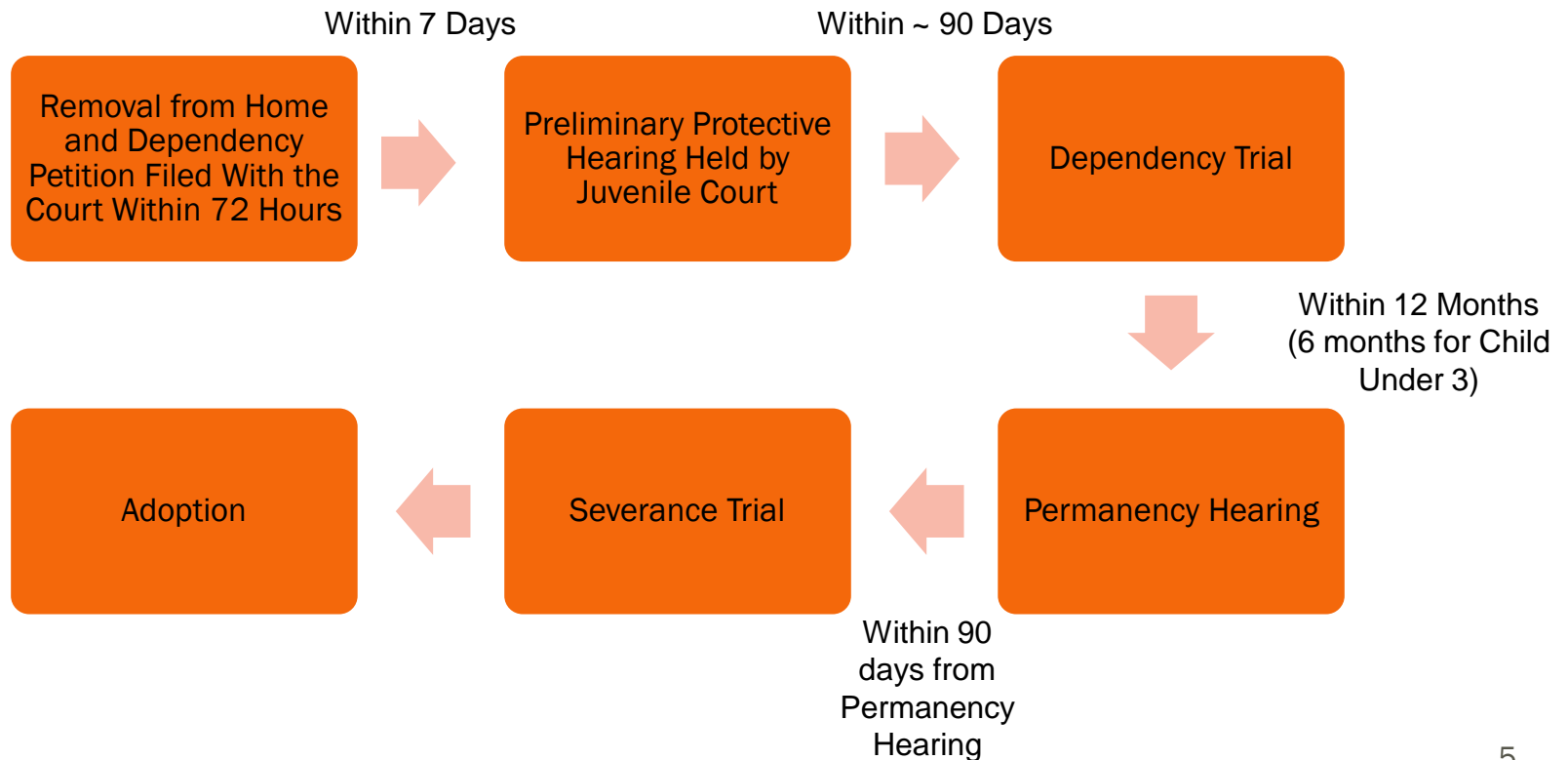
Every Child Deserves a Permanent, Safe Home

- Parents have a constitutional right to parent their child unless the child is not safe.
- Federal law, ASFA (Adoption and Safe Families Act, 1997) mandates that a child has an opportunity for permanency while giving parents a limited time frame in which to demonstrate the ability to safely parent their child.
- Arizona law requires CPS to provide reunification services to parents to help them remedy the circumstances that brought their child into care unless CPS is relieved of this obligation by the Court. A.R.S. 8-846

Finding a Child a Safe Home

Severance

Typical Time Frame = 15 months or longer



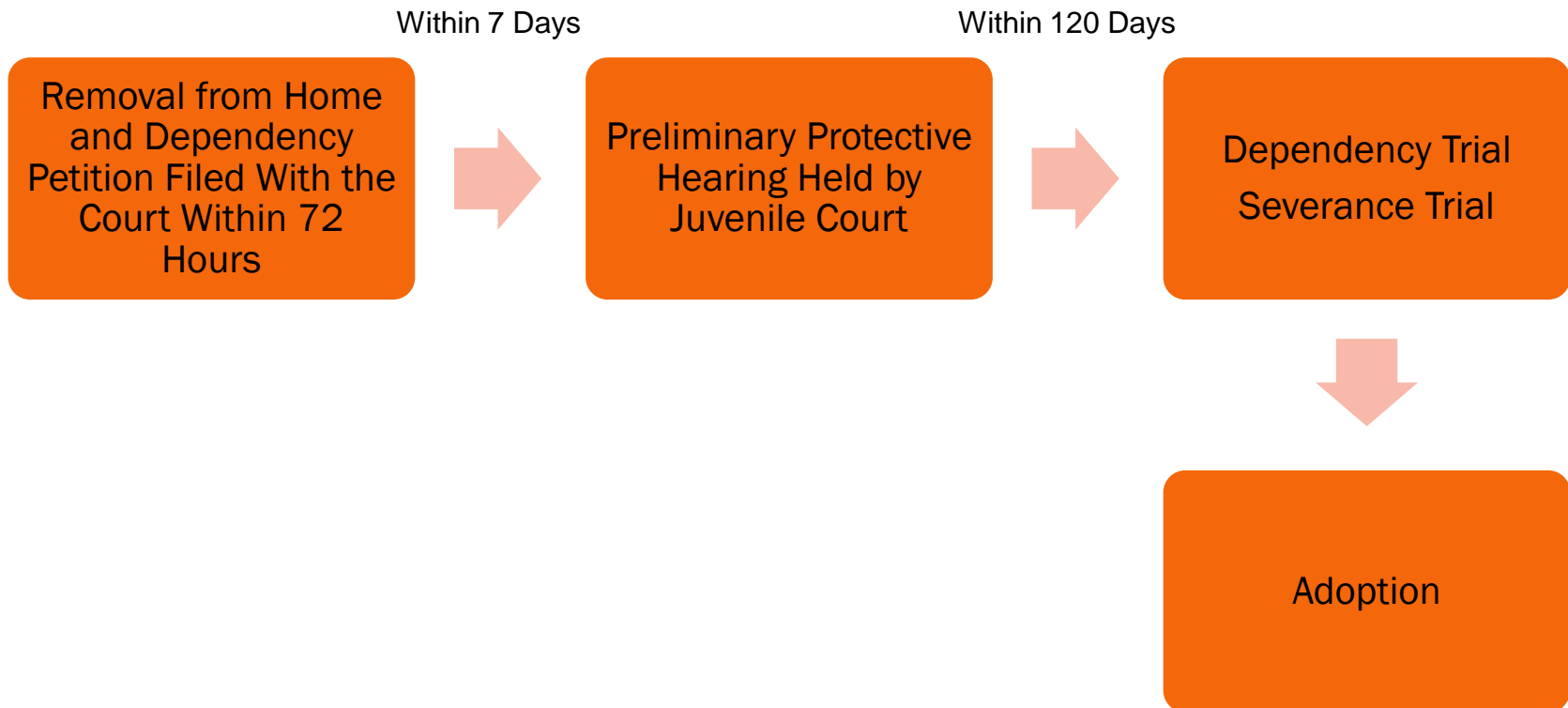
Exceptions to Reunification Services

- The Department is required to provide reunification services to a parent to help correct the problems that brought their child into custody.
- However, if the Juvenile Court decides reunification services are not required because an “aggravating circumstance” exists, the Department does not have to provide these services.
- The list of aggravating circumstances can be found at A.R.S. 8-846.

Finding a Child a Safe Home

Severance Fast Track

Typical time frame = within six months



Children Grow Up Quickly

- Arizona recognizes the importance of children growing up in homes that are safe, nurturing and meet their needs.
- Arizona supports these guiding principles.



Reasons to Sever Parental Rights

- **Neglect or Willful Abuse**
- **Abandonment** if a parent fails to maintain a normal parental relationship without just cause for 6 months or longer.
- **Mental Illness or Deficiency** if the parent's condition effects parenting and the condition will last for a prolonged and indeterminate period of time.
- **Chronic Abuse of Dangerous Drugs/Substances** if the parent's condition effects parenting and the condition will last for a prolonged and indeterminate period of time.

Reasons to Sever Parental Rights

- A **Felony Conviction** if the nature of the parent's felony demonstrates parent's unfitness or inability to have future custody and control of the child (i.e., murder of a child).
- **Length of Incarceration** if the parent's sentence is of such a length that the child will be deprived of a normal home for a number of years.
- **Consent** to adopt by a parent.
- **Parental rights terminated** to another child **within the last 2 years** and the parent is currently unable to parent.

Reasons to Sever Parental Rights

- **Child in Department's Custody** (Department is required to provide appropriate services to the parents) and:
 - The parent will not participate in the services **(9 months)**
 - The parent will not participate in the services and the child is under 3 years old **(6 months)**
 - The parent can't benefit from the services **(15 months)**

Working for the Best Interest of the Child

- Every parent has a fundamental right to parent his/her child.
- Every child has the right to grow up in a safe and nurturing home.
- At times the Department must intervene to protect the safety of a child.
- The Department must work with the family to return the child unless the Court orders no reunification services.
- If the parent is unable to parent the child, the Department will ask the Court to sever the parents rights so the child can grow up in a safe and nurturing home.